

come to the floor today. This week the New York Times ran a story detailing a recent agreement signed between Wal-Mart Stores and the Department of Labor. Wal-Mart was fined just over \$135,000 for 24 child labor violations that occurred in New Hampshire, Arkansas, and Connecticut. One of the most egregious violations involved a boy who injured his thumb while using a chain saw to cut Christmas trees. Others were operating cardboard balers and chain saws, which are illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to work on. The \$135,000 figure is a paltry figure that demonstrates DOL's lax enforcement policy. A \$135,000 penalty against a company the size of Wal-Mart has the same financial impact as a 40-cent penalty for a million-dollar company. DOL has sent American companies a message with this settlement: violators of child labor laws needn't worry about child labor, even if they are caught.

Beyond this minimal fining of Wal-Mart, the Labor Department recently released new regulations that place young workers at greater risk of serious injuries. The new regulations are the first since the May 2002 release of a report detailing dozens of deficiencies in our Nation's child labor laws. The report, published by NIOSH, recommended over 40 changes in child labor laws to better protect America's employed youth from dangerous jobs and equipment. Since the 2002 release, it is estimated that more than 600,000 child workers have been injured in the United States. Among the disappointments in the new regulations, fast food restaurants can now employ 14- and 15-year-olds to operate deep fryers and grills that are cooled to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. According to NIOSH, however, half of all burn injuries among child laborers occur in fast food restaurants. In another regulatory change, 16- and 17-year-olds are now allowed to load paper balers and compactors that meet specified safety standards. Since 1954, children under the age of 18 have been prohibited from any contact with these machines. As with cooking, compliance with this standard will require vigilance by employers who put youth in contact with these machines. Unfortunately, the Labor Department requires no specific training for young workers under these new regulations. Issuing regulations that sometimes allow exposure to certain machines, equipment, and hot surfaces, but not to others, is confusing both to workers and employers. It is bound to result in young workers being exposed to greater dangers. Additionally, young workers still work at dangerous heights, on tractors, in pesticide handling, and in exposure to lead and silica. These hazards and more are recognized in the NIOSH report but have yet to be addressed by the Labor Department.

Sadly, this is not the first instance of Wal-Mart employing dangerous and illegal child labor. In March 2000, the State of Maine fined the company

\$205,650 for violations of child labor laws in every one of its 20 stores in the State. In January 2004, a weeklong internal audit of 128 stores found 1,371 instances in which minors worked too late at night, during school hours, or for too many hours in a day. In the most recent fine levied against Wal-Mart, the average fine per violation is approximately just \$5,600. This is about half of DOL's maximum penalty of \$11,000 per violation. Wal-Mart banks \$285 billion in annual sales. This is not what one would classify a financial hardship.

The most disturbing part of Wal-Mart's settlement with the Labor Department is not even the small and insignificant fines, however. The distressing part of the agreement are the special favors handed out to Wal-Mart. The agreement, which was signed on January 6, was not even made public until now. It took a reporter to question officials about concerns raised by several DOL employees that the agreement gave Wal-Mart special favors. Those employees have remained anonymous, however, due to their fear of retaliation.

What special favors were given to Wal-Mart? First off, DOL promises to give the retailer 15 days' notice prior to any "wage and hour" investigation, like failure to pay minimum wage or overtime. As my colleagues will recall, I have tried for the past year to get the Department of Labor to reverse their damning new overtime provisions which stripped overtime pay benefits from thousands of American workers. This administration's Labor Department continues to stand opposed to respecting worker rights, child labor rights, and overtime rights. But Wal-Mart is really their perfect ally, since they do not allow their workers to unionize. DOL's cozying up to Wal-Mart is outrageous and completely unacceptable. By doling out these special privileges, worker rights in America are taking a giant leap backwards.

The degree to which the current administration has relaxed worker rights should not be seen in a partisan light. Elizabeth Dole, U.S. Secretary of Labor in the first President Bush administration, launched a crackdown amidst record levels of reported child labor law violations in America in 1990. She reminded all Americans that "the children of America are our future. The Department of Labor will do everything within its power to protect children against those who violate our child labor laws. The first step in this process is to reassess our fine structure and take immediate action to step up enforcement." This was the view of a previous Republican Department of Labor. Sadly, we have regressed.

According to John R. Fraser, who was our Government's top wage official under the first President Bush and President Clinton, said the advance-notice provision was unusual. Quoting Mr. Fraser from the New York Times article:

Giving the company 15 days' notice of any investigation is very unusual. The language appears to go beyond child labor allegations and cover all wage and hour allegations. It appears to put Wal-Mart in a privileged position that to my knowledge no other employer has.

And an anonymous DOL employee, who is a 20-year veteran of the Department's Wage and Hour Division, said "with child labor cases involving the use of hazardous machinery, why give 15 days' notice before we can do an investigation? What's the rationale?"

I don't know what the rationale is, Mr. President. There is no viable excuse for this agreement. It flies in the face of our labor laws. It seems more than coincidental that this Labor Department which has taken away overtime pay is now coming close to rewarding a corporation for doing the same. Is it mere coincidence also, then, that Wal-Mart gives more money to the Republican Party than any other corporation in America? Wal-Mart's political action committee, the biggest company PAC in America, gave Republicans 81 percent of its \$1.3 million in donations in the past 2 years, the highest proportion of any of the top 25 corporate PACs, according to PoliticalMoneyLine, a nonpartisan Washington-based group.

Wal-Mart's top three managers each gave the maximum individual contribution of \$2,000 to President Bush's campaign last year and Jay Allen, vice president for corporate affairs went one step further. He raised at least \$100,000 to reelect the President, earning him the Bush campaign's designation of "Pioneer." I bet he had to work some overtime to fit that into his busy schedule.

It is often said that money buys influence in Washington, DC. I certainly hope that is not the case here. I would hope that just because Wal-Mart gives so heavily to the Republican Party they are not given special favors by our Republican President. So Mr. President, I urge the Department of Labor to rethink this agreement. How can child labor be investigated if companies are given 2 weeks' advance notice? Of course they will clean up their act temporarily, but what is to stop them from again regressing into their illegal ways? Nothing. There is no incentive. This agreement was completely unwarranted and should be reversed at the earliest possible time.

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the University of North Carolina Tar Heels men's basketball team on their national championship. This is the fourth NCAA Division I title for this storied program and a well deserved finish to an amazing season.

Now, I know some of you are wondering . . . Yes, I am a Duke graduate and a Duke fan, and as you know, Duke

and North Carolina have one of the most legendary rivalries in the nation. That being said, I truly have been behind this team—I even wore Carolina blue to several events in North Carolina last week to show my support!

On Monday night, the Tar Heels defeated the Illinois Fighting Illini 75-70 in a remarkable display of teamwork and talent. Led by the performance of Raymond Felton and Sean May, the Tar Heels played strong basketball on both ends of the court. They were able to make critical baskets when the game was on the line and played tenacious defense that stifled their opponent. With this victory, this year's Tar Heel team has solidified its place in college basketball history alongside Carolina greats such as Michael Jordan and James Worthy.

Roy Williams, who returned to his home state and alma mater just two years ago, earned his first title and demonstrated once again why he is one of the best coaches in college basketball. Under his leadership, this group of talented young men developed into truly great players with heart and determination.

The Tar Heels' Sean May was named most outstanding player in the Final Four for his dominant scoring and rebounding. Sean finished an incredible season with 26 points and 10 rebounds against Illinois.

This year started with great expectations as the Tar Heels were picked as the pre-season #1 team by Sports Illustrated. However, in recent years, such impressive rankings were not always the case. Seniors on this Tar Heel team faced great adversity early in their careers as they fought to overcome a disappointing 8-20 season their freshman year. Still, these players were determined to work hard to become a better team. And did they ever. Just 4 years later, these young men completed an incredible turnaround and are now able to call themselves national champions.

Today is a proud day for Coach Williams, his terrific players and the state of North Carolina. College basketball is a special tradition for so many North Carolinians. It is a pastime shared from generation to generation and amongst neighbors and friends. It's what so many folks chat about at the grocery store, before class, over dinner, and after church. We are so proud of the North Carolina Tar Heels' accomplishments this season and delighted that they gave us yet another memory to talk about for years to come.

I yield the floor.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS MEN'S BASKETBALL SEASON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Monday night in Saint Louis a dream season came to an end. The University of Illinois was defeated for only the second time this season as they fell to the University of North Carolina Tar Heels. But as painful as the loss was, it does not detract from a remarkable season.

Head coach Bruce Weber and his Illini should know there is nothing to be disappointed about. As much as I would have enjoyed seeing the Illini conclude their remarkable run with an NCAA championship, there is no doubting what the Illini have accomplished. The team tied an NCAA record with 37 victories. They made the first championship game appearance in the school's 100-year basketball history. They won regular-season and conference tournament Big 10 championships and were ranked first overall in the Associated Press poll since early in the season.

If I could pick one word to describe the Illini this season, it would be "team." Rarely has a group of young men worked together as well as the Illini has. After Illinois defeated Louisville 72 to 57 on Saturday evening, Louisville head coach Rick Pitino said, "I don't know if they necessarily had the greatest talent I've seen from a Final Four, but they're the best team I've seen in some time."

The Illini are the ultimate team, and that is the ultimate compliment to coach Weber and his players.

Every man on the floor was capable of leading the team to victory, whether it was guards Dee Brown, Luther Head or Deron Williams, or forwards James Augustine or Roger Powell. Yet Illinois plays within head coach Bruce Weber's system and doesn't allow ego, personal statistical goals, or anything else to disrupt their teamwork.

Unfortunately, they came up short against North Carolina. But the State of Illinois is proud of their Illini. An orange hue has been cast across the State as Illinoisans got behind the team for their NCAA tournament run. So many people have enjoyed this tournament and they won't soon forget where they were when the Illini shocked Arizona, or when Roger Powell slam-dunked the rebound from his own three-point shot against Louisville.

I would like to congratulate B. Joseph White, who became the University's 16th president on January 31 of this year, and the administration, faculty, staff, student body, and fans of the University of Illinois on making it to the championship game of the 2005 NCAA tournament.

To the coaches, Illini players, and their families, thanks for the memories. Thanks for showing us what teamwork is all about.

HONORING ARLEN LANCASTER

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a longtime staff member who is moving onto a new and exciting work challenge. Arlen Lancaster has been a valued member of my staff since the start of my first term in the Senate in 1999. He is leaving my staff to become the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Arlen joined my staff as a legislative correspondent and worked his way

through two promotions. He now serves as senior policy adviser, covering agriculture, conservation, rural development, energy and the Idaho National Laboratory, natural resources and public lands, defense as well as serving as the staff director of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation and Rural Revitalization. Arlen was instrumental in the work that I have done regarding the conservation title in the 2002 farm bill and shepherding the historic Healthy Forest Restoration Act through Congress.

While Arlen's family hails from the Burley area in my home State of Idaho, he lived in many areas due to his father's work with the U.S. Air Force. He attended high school and college in Utah, graduating with a political science degree from the University of Utah. He is definitely a Westerner at heart and his work for me has benefited many in Idaho.

On a personal note, Arlen was great to work with. He is decisive, insightful and innovative. His easy-going personality and sense of humor permeated all that he did in his public service for the people of Idaho and the United States. He provided a certain spark to my office. In fact, he sparked so much with another LA that they will be getting married this summer and Arlen and Staci have my best wishes for a long, happy life together.

I am excited by Arlen's new challenge at USDA and know he is well up to the task. Although I won't have the same opportunity to work with him on a daily basis, I look forward to our new working relationship and Arlen's continuing successes. His extensive knowledge of agriculture, natural resources and other policy issues will serve Arlen well in his new capacity.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANTONIO R. BAINES

• Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an exceptional officer in the United States Army, Lieutenant Colonel Antonio R. Baines, upon his retirement after more than 20 years of distinguished service. Throughout his career, Colonel Baines has personified the Army values of duty, integrity, and selfless service across the many missions the Army provides in defense of our Nation. As a Congressional Legislative Liaison Officer in the office of the Secretary of the Army, many of us on Capitol Hill have enjoyed the opportunity to work with Lieutenant Colonel Baines on a wide variety of Army issues and programs, and it is my privilege to recognize his many accomplishments. I commend his superb service to the United States Army and this great Nation.

Lieutenant Colonel Antonio R. Baines, the son of Mr. Albert and Yolanda Baines of Jonesboro, GA, attended high school in Hephzibah, GA,